

Phoenix Academy

The Curve, London W12 0RQ

Inspection dates

19–20 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive headteacher leads by example. As a result, leaders are ambitious and work well together. The school provides a good quality of education.
- Trustees hold leaders strongly to account for the curriculum and pupils' outcomes. They know the school well and provide effective support to help it improve still further.
- Staff morale is high. They are proud to work at the school and value the professional development they receive. High-quality training has ensured that teaching is good.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and explain their subject content well. Pupils appreciate the help and support they receive.
- Staff have high expectations, particularly of pupils' behaviour. They apply the behaviour policy consistently. Consequently, pupils behave well and wear their uniform with pride. Pupils feel safe in school.
- Leaders have a clear vision for the curriculum and how they assess the quality of pupils' learning. Leaders are taking the right actions to ensure that pupils develop a deep understanding of their subjects. They are currently in year two of their long-term plan.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well. For example, in 2018, pupils' progress at the end of key stage 4 across a range of subjects was consistently in line with national averages. Progress in English was significantly above the national average.
- Leaders and teachers have been particularly effective in helping pupils to become confident readers. However, pupils' writing skills are not as well developed. This is because some teaching does not fully support pupils to explain their ideas or use accurate vocabulary and spelling.
- Pupils are not consistently resilient learners. Some are not confident in discussing and sharing their ideas with one another.
- The overall effectiveness of middle leadership is good. In a few subject areas, particularly in modern foreign languages and geography, standards are not as high as in other subjects, such as English and mathematics.
- Pupils' attendance, although lower than the national average, is improving. Lower attendance is largely due to higher levels of absence for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders build on their strong leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - there is high-quality subject leadership across the school, particularly in geography and modern foreign languages
 - they implement their remaining plans for each subject’s curriculum and assessment to help pupils develop excellence in their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Move pupils’ attitudes to their learning and progress to outstanding by helping them to:
 - be more resilient in their learning, including being able to discuss and share their ideas confidently
 - develop their writing skills, particularly in explaining and articulating their ideas fully and accurately across the curriculum.
- Further improve pupils’ attendance, particularly for those with SEND.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher is strongly ambitious for the school. There is absolute determination across the whole staff to make the school the best it can be. Leaders have made some tough decisions along the way, including, for example, closing the sixth form temporarily. These decisions enable leaders to prioritise their work effectively and give pupils a good standard of education.
- Staff are highly positive about working at the school. Teachers feel very well supported in managing their workloads and they benefit from high-quality training. Teachers new to the profession are positive about their experiences at the school. One commented, 'I feel lucky to be here.' Others shared similar views.
- There is some variability in the quality of subject leadership. This relates to the quality of the curriculum and standards in a few subjects, such as art, geography and modern foreign languages.
- Leaders regularly check the quality of pupils' learning. This means that they have an accurate picture of the impact that teaching has across different subjects.
- Leaders are taking effective decisions to further improve the curriculum, teaching and assessment. Their plans are entirely appropriate and benefit pupils because most staff teach their subject content effectively.
- Leaders have chosen to use research evidence to help them to plan the curriculum and to inform their training for staff. They have a clear rationale for why they opted for a three-year key stage 3 and a two-year key stage 4 curriculum. Subject leaders have carefully planned the content that pupils will learn in their subjects from Year 7 through to the end of key stage 4.
- Leaders have put in place a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils. Leaders are committed to the performing arts but currently a rotation operates for teaching art and music at key stage 3 over alternate half-terms. Leaders, including trustees, understand that this limits pupils' preparation for key stage 4. They plan to address this as the school roll grows. Pupils also told inspectors that they would like to see GCSE drama back on offer at key stage 4.
- Leaders have increased the proportion of pupils at key stage 4 who study the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). Over the last two years, the proportion of pupils who studied the EBacc was well below the national average. Currently, it is now double the national average. Over time, by 2022, the ambition is for this to reach 70%.
- Leaders welcome external challenge, including from other school leaders. They use these findings to check their evaluation of the school and to make further improvements. Leaders and staff are completely open, honest and articulate about the school's successes, its strengths and its areas for development.
- The school is becoming more popular with parents and carers. For example, there are double the requests this year for a place in Year 7 for September 2019. A recent school survey was completed by 291 parents, with 95% strongly agreeing or agreeing that the school is well led and managed.

- Leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the barriers facing some of its pupils. As a result, leaders prioritise the use of additional funding well, including for pupils with SEND and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Leaders' work to improve pupils' literacy in Year 7 is particularly effective.
- The new leadership for pupils with SEND has ensured that pupils are well supported. There is a regular review of the impact of support to check it is effective. As a result, pupils with SEND make good progress, in line with their peers.

Governance of the school

- The trustees have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They ensure that they receive a wide range of information from leaders. The regular report that they receive from the executive headteacher is very comprehensive. They use this and other information to ask probing questions, particularly about how the school can make further improvements to the curriculum, behaviour, teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- As well as supporting leaders with external reviews of the school, the trust conducts internal reviews, involving a visit to the school three times per year. Trustees choose to be involved with these reviews. The findings are discussed and used to challenge leaders about the impact of their work.
- The trustees are also effective in managing support for leaders, for example in accessing resources and expertise from the Curriculum Centre, such as with the introduction of Latin at key stage 3.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All checks on the suitability of adults to work with children meet statutory requirements.
- Pupils at the school feel safe. They spoke to inspectors about the differences that leaders have made to the school environment. A pupil in Year 11 said that 'School has been transformed, so different, rules, regulations and behaviour.' This view chimed with many pupils. The 'no-touch' policy has been especially effective in helping pupils to feel safe. Pupils told inspectors that any fighting or bullying is rare. This is reflected in the school's records. Pupils are taught to be tolerant and respectful of difference, for example, in relation to someone's sexuality or religious beliefs.
- Leaders understand the risks that pupils may encounter in the local community. This is particularly clear in relation to knife crime and staying safe online. Their effective work with other agencies, such as the Metropolitan Police, means that pupils are confident in talking about how to protect themselves from knife crime.
- Leaders know pupils well. The pastoral teams understand pupils' backgrounds and provide effective and responsive day-to-day support. Leaders work with external agencies, as and when required, to support pupils.
- The trust has responsibility for some school policies, such as supporting pupils with medical conditions and safeguarding. However, the trust has not been as thorough in

its checking of the implementation of these policies as it has been with other areas of the school's work.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers enjoy teaching their subjects. They have strong subject knowledge, which they use well. This is particularly noticeable with regards to the quality and clarity of their explanations to pupils. They help pupils to understand difficult concepts.
- Teachers have a positive working relationship with pupils. Pupils speak positively about their experiences in their lessons. They say teachers are helpful and encourage them to do well.
- The teaching of reading is particularly effective. Leaders restructured the school day, trained staff and put in place a comprehensive reading scheme. This has had a tangible impact on improving pupils' reading knowledge and skills. Pupils in Year 7 read confidently to inspectors. Other groups who receive phonics or guided reading support are taught well and make strong progress.
- Pupils value the feedback they receive as part of school and subject policies. One example includes 'Feedback Fridays' in mathematics, where pupils are helped to address any misconceptions or errors they have made in their work during their lessons that week. Pupils talk confidently, using a range of examples from their work, about how teachers' feedback helps them to make improvements to their work.
- Teaching does not ensure that pupils are as confident and accurate in their writing skills as they are in their reading. This is because teachers do not consistently encourage pupils to use and spell subject-specific vocabulary accurately.
- Leaders refer to the next journey of improving teaching to include a focus on ensuring that pupils have what they call a 'zest for learning' and a 'move from compliance to active engagement'. They are right. This is because, currently, teaching does not support pupils in developing the full range of skills needed to help them be resilient learners, for example in being confident in sharing and discussing their ideas with one another.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders have put in place a detailed and age-appropriate plan for personal, social, health and economic education. This includes a wide range of topics and ways to learn about how to stay safe, including when online and in the local community.
- Pupils are aware of how to manage some risks, such as travel to and from school, and how to avoid the dangers of knife crime. Year 11 pupils spoke about learning the difference between anxiety and depression as part of mental health awareness. However, some pupils are not as confident in talking about the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

- Compulsory involvement in after-school sport is one reason why a high proportion of replies to the pupil survey strongly agreed or agreed that pupils are encouraged to look after their physical health.
- Pupils have access to extra-curricular activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and debating. Pupils in older year groups told inspectors that they would value more visits outside of school.
- The school careers programme helps pupils to prepare for the next steps of their education. Pupils benefit from visits from employers and guest speakers from colleges and apprenticeship routes. Year 11 destinations for last year show that almost all pupils moved on successfully to school or college sixth forms. Leaders have plans in place to improve careers guidance, in line with statutory guidance.
- Pupils' personal development, in terms of their attitudes to learning and their maturity, is strong. They have a clear sense of right and wrong. However, some pupils are too reliant on support or direction from their teachers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils take pride in their appearance and their work. They are polite to visitors and each other.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, in corridors and in outside areas. Pupils describe behaviour as 'good' and say that the school is strict. Pupils are not worried about any areas of the large school site being unsafe. Year groups have their own designated spaces, and all areas are supervised and well managed.
- Leaders take a firm stance with behaviour. Last year, permanent exclusions were high, but there have been no permanent exclusions this year. Fixed-term exclusions, although declining, are slightly above the national average. The proportion of pupils receiving more than one fixed-term exclusion has decreased sharply.
- The decline in exclusions is because leaders have developed more support and interventions to help pupils to manage their own behaviour. For example, 'Aspire' (the internal unit) provides personalised support for pupils. It offers mentoring, small-group teaching and social skills development. Pupils would benefit from further support to help them in moving successfully back into mainstream classes.
- Pupils' attendance is well managed and improving towards the national average. One key group where attendance is lower is pupils with SEND.
- A few pupils have recently started using off-site educational provision, either on a week's short-term support programme using the local authority provision or part-time college provision. Leaders monitor pupils' attendance, progress and welfare when they are not in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, pupils' progress at the end of key stage 4 across all groups of subjects was in line with the national average. In English, it was significantly above the national average.

- Pupils' attainment is improving. Higher proportions of pupils in 2018 made strong progress to achieve higher GCSE grades in both English and mathematics. However, the proportion of pupils who achieved the EBacc, although higher than 2017, was low compared to the national average.
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieved well in 2018. They made progress in line with other pupils nationally. Currently, disadvantaged pupils make strong progress overall. This is because leaders tackle the barriers to learning for this group. Leaders' work to improve pupils' reading and numeracy skills is successfully helping them to improve their standard of work across many subjects.
- Other groups of pupils, including those with SEND and the most able, make good progress. New leadership of SEND since September 2018 has developed a good understanding of these pupils' needs. Work to improve attendance and behaviour, combined with additional support in lessons, is paying dividends. Most-able pupils are successfully supported to achieve in other ways, for example through the school's work with other local schools to achieve the highest grades in mathematics.
- Although outcomes are stronger in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, this is not always the case. For example, in subjects such as modern foreign languages, art and geography, outcomes are lower. This is, in part, because there have been challenges in recruiting staff and recent changes in subject leadership. In these subjects, the quality of teaching and learning is variable over time.

School details

Unique reference number	143129
Local authority	Hammersmith & Fulham
Inspection number	10053557

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	426
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	John Nash
Executive headteacher	Oliver Knight
Telephone number	020 8749 1141
Website	www.phoenixacademy.org.uk
Email address	admin@phoenixacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is a member of the Future Academies Trust. It opened in September 2016.
- The executive headteacher took up post in September 2017.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Last year, leaders took the decision to temporarily close the sixth form.
- The proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is well above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The overall proportion of pupils with SEND is broadly in line with the national average.
- Leaders make use of short-term off-site education at The Childerley Centre as required. Part-time college courses at West Thames College are also used.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited lessons in a range of subjects. All visits to classrooms were undertaken jointly with school leaders. During these visits and in other activities, inspectors evaluated a wide range of books and assessments to look at pupils' learning over time.
- The inspection team held meetings with senior, pastoral and subject leaders to evaluate the impact of their work. Meetings were also held with trustees, newly qualified teachers and different groups of pupils.
- Inspectors evaluated nine responses to Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents, 50 replies to the staff survey and 28 replies to the pupil questionnaire. The views of these three groups were also evaluated using the school's own surveys from the current school year.
- Inspectors considered a variety of documentation provided by leaders, including: internal assessment information for pupils in all year groups; external reviews of the school's work; leaders' self-evaluation; the school improvement planning; minutes of governing body and trustee meetings; attendance and behaviour information; case studies; a variety of school policies; the single central record of recruitment checks; and a wide range of other information relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Sam Hailey, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Louise Voden	Ofsted Inspector
Bruce Goddard	Ofsted Inspector

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